

VU Research Portal

Personality traits of church planters and other church leaders in Europe (II)

Foppen, Annemarie; Paas, Stefan; Van Saane, Joke

published in

Journal of Empirical Theology : JET
2018

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1163/15709256-12341377](https://doi.org/10.1163/15709256-12341377)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

document license

Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Foppen, A., Paas, S., & Van Saane, J. (2018). Personality traits of church planters and other church leaders in Europe (II). *Journal of Empirical Theology : JET*, 31(2), 288-308. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15709256-12341377>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl

Personality Traits of Church Planters and Other Church Leaders in Europe (II)

Annemarie Foppen

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
a.foppen@vu.nl

Stefan Paas

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
s.paas@vu.nl

Joke van Saane

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
j.w.van.saane@vu.nl

Abstract

In search of a renewal of their mission in the secularized West, an increasing number of (Protestant) churches have embarked on the creation of new faith communities with a strong missionary purpose. This entrepreneurial approach of mission raises a number of questions, among which the issue of leadership is paramount. Currently, however, very little reliable empirical research has been done among faith entrepreneurs, or 'church planters', in Europe. In this article the personality dimensions of 215 church planters are compared with 307 'regular' church leaders (pastors), based on the so-called 'Big Five' personality test. Independent samples t-tests showed that church planters are significantly more extravert, open to new experiences, and conscientious than 'regular' pastors, and significantly less neurotic, while scores on agreeableness are more or less similar. These results are discussed with a view to existing literature on church planting and entrepreneurship in the West.

Keywords

church planters – pastors; mission – BFI – psychological profiling – Big Five

1 Introduction

An increasing number of (mostly Protestant) churches in Europe have responded to the challenges of secularization by embarking on the creation of new faith communities. This ‘church planting’ is done, partly to connect with groups that have drifted away from the church or with new immigrants, and partly to create places of innovation (Paas 2016; Moynagh 2017). Viewed through the lens of social science, this strategy invites scholars of religion to adopt a new research agenda based on religious market assumptions. According to Stephen R. Warner (1993:1081), this agenda would pay more attention to the building of new religious organizations than the decline of old ones, it would focus more on the empowering and facilitating roles of religion than on its (lack of) credibility for modern people, and religious affiliation would be seen as a matter of life-long mobility rather than “an ascriptive identity”. Also, Warner asserted that “those who focus on individuals and organizations would analyze entrepreneurial as well as bureaucratic and professional religious careers” (1993:1081).

In a previous article we have introduced church planting in the context of entrepreneurial studies (Foppen et al. 2017; cf. Volland 2015). Also, we have shown how existing church planting research tends to focus on the level of organizational success or failure, while neglecting the issue of leadership or entrepreneurship (but cf. Vos 2012; Paas, Vos 2013; Paas, Vos 2016). This is unfortunate, as the success or failure of religious organizations may be dependent, at least to some extent, on the nature and quality of their leadership. Furthermore, for churches to be effective in the recruitment, assessment, training, and counselling of future entrepreneurial leaders, more research needs to be done (cf. Paas, Schoemaker-Kooy 2018).

Psychological profiling is increasingly used in the context of religious professionals (cf. Piedmont 1999), for example to assess their spirituality (Kosek 2000; Strawn, Alexander 2008; Francis 2009), vocation (Galea 2010; Sunardi 2014), leadership style (Krekeler 2010; Francis, Crea 2015), career success (Machel 2006; Miner 2007; Joseph et al. 2011; Nortomaa 2016), or to explain theological differences (Burton et al. 2010; Francis 2013; Village 2013). As far as we know, our 2017 study was the first to use psychological profiling to explore the entrepreneurial dimension of religious leadership (Foppen et al. 2017). We concentrated on the personality types of European church planters (N=59), based on the so-called Big Five model (Goldberg 1990, 1993). This fits into a general approach where effective (religious) leadership is explained by the personality of leaders (Van Saane 2012:14-33): either their psychological traits (Yukl 2010:43), their skills, or their power. Since there was no control group of religious professionals available, we compared the results of the church planters with a norm-group of

41-year old American internet-users ($N=1115$) as presented in Srivastava et al. 2003 (using the same operationalization of the Big Five model). The results showed that church planters scored significantly lower on the dimension of Neuroticism than the norm-group. With regard to Extraversion our participants scored significantly higher than the general population, while there were no significant differences with regard to Agreeableness. On Conscientiousness church planters scored higher than the norm-group, but this difference was not statistically significant. Finally, the dimension Openness to experience could not be analyzed as the reliability of the scale was too low. In short, church planters are significantly more extravert and significantly less neurotic than the general population, while they are about as agreeable as any other person.

While this research, being the first of its kind, has provided insight into the personality profiles of entrepreneurial church leaders, some important improvements could be made. First, a better (both in terms of clarity and relevance) profile could be made when church planters are compared with other religious leaders rather than using a general population as norm-group. Second, a comparison with regular pastors could lead to more accurate outcomes, and maybe extra significant differences with regard to some personality dimensions. Third, using a larger dataset could lead to a better validation of some results and a greater reliability of the different measures, especially with regard to the dimension Openness to experience.

In the present study, we have expanded our data set of church planters to an N of 215 (including the older data set of $N=59$). Also, we have added data of 307 'regular' (Protestant) pastors, enabling a more appropriate comparison. Thus, the main body of this study consists of a comparison between church planters and other religious leaders. This will be complemented by comparisons of religious leaders with the general population in order to set some coordinates that the personality profiles of church planters can be plotted against. Results will be discussed in the light of previous research among church planters and other religious leaders, allowing us to draw some conclusions with regard to the selection of leadership for church plants. In order to streamline terminology, we use the labels 'church planters' and 'regular pastors' for the two groups in our study.

2 The Big Five Personality Test

The Big Five model of personality traits contains five supposedly stable personality dimensions: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN). The operationalization employed in this study

is by Oliver John (Big Five Inventory, 1991; 2008). John designed a self-report questionnaire with 44 items in total. These items are short statements and the participants have to indicate whether these statements apply to them on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Big Five model's use in academic research and in organizational practice (e.g., in job interviews) indicates that a relationship is expected between leadership personality and organizational effectiveness.

For a full description of the Big Five Model see Foppen et al. 2017. The following paragraphs present each dimension in sum and include hypotheses to be examined in the next section.

O: Openness to Experience

This is a personality trait that characterizes someone who is intellectually curious, seeks new experiences, and explores new ideas. If church planters are (religious) entrepreneurs and thus more likely to be curious and explorative, it is to be expected that they will have high scores on this dimension.

Hypothesis 1: church planters are more open to experiences than regular pastors.

C: Conscientiousness

This personality trait distinguishes individuals who work hard, are persistent and organized, and who are responsible from individuals who are impulsive, irresponsible, unreliable, and lazy. As entrepreneurs have a high need for achievement and self-directedness, it is to be expected that church planters, as religious entrepreneurs, will score higher than regular pastors.

Hypothesis 2: church planters are more conscientious than regular pastors.

E: Extraversion

This dimension refers to the degree in which an individual is social, outgoing, energetic, assertive, talkative and enthusiastic, as opposed to individuals who are quiet, reserved, and withdrawn. Extraversion is positively related to interest in entrepreneurship.

Hypothesis 3: church planters are more extravert than regular pastors.

A: Agreeableness

Individuals who have high scores on this dimension are characterized as sympathetic, kind, trusting, forgiving, caring, cooperative, and altruistic. While many researchers think that entrepreneurs are less agreeable than other people, there is no real consensus on this point. As for church planters, the church context may moderate a possible tendency of entrepreneurs to be less agreeable, as this context

values kindness, humility and respect (neighbour love, servant leadership). Thus, we assume that church planters will have 'normal' scores on this dimension, i.e. not significantly different from other professionals working in the church.

Hypothesis 4: church planters are as agreeable as regular pastors.

N: Neuroticism

High scores on neuroticism indicates emotional instability, i.e., a diminished potential to cope with unexpected events, failures, and change. As entrepreneurs work in a relatively unstructured environment where they have primary responsibility and where they often experience high pressure, they must be self-confident and emotionally stable in order to cope with difficulties. Also, it is plausible that church planting contexts attract religious leaders with more than average self-confidence. Therefore, church planters, insofar they are religious entrepreneurs, are expected to be less neurotic than regular pastors.

Hypothesis 5: church planters are less neurotic than regular pastors.

3 Method

3.1 *Sample*

Regular pastors (N=307) and church planters (N=215) in our sample were predominantly male (87.3%). Church planters were, on average, younger than the regular pastors, with 67.5% in the 26-45 years category (regular pastors: 38.7%), and a mean age of 41 (regular pastors: 48). Both groups show fairly high levels of (theological) education (see Table 1). The data point toward a somewhat higher average education for regular pastors, with 77.2% having finished a MA degree or higher (church planters 57.6%).

The regular pastors who filled out the online questionnaire were all Dutch. The church planters were international. Table 2 shows their nationalities, as indicated by the church planters (open question). Interestingly, around one fifth (20.8%) of the church planters have their countries of origin outside Europe. Among them, United States citizens are the most numerous (14.3%). Also, it seems that approximately one in twenty church planters hold dual citizenship (5.7%).

Participants were asked which denominations they felt connected with most. As denominational labels differ in various countries and languages, and are usually hard to translate, we present two tables: Table 3 shows denominational attachment for the regular pastors (all Dutch), and Table 4 for the church planters. In Table 3 we have listed the Dutch labels for denominations

TABLE 1 Highest level of education

	Regular pastors		Church planters	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate	NA	NA	10	4.7
Theological candidate	20	6.5	NA	NA
Bachelor degree	43	14.0	70	32.6
Master degree	221	72.0	111	51.6
PhD or DMin	16	5.2	13	6.0
Other	7	2.3	11	5.1
Total	307		215	

TABLE 2 Countries of origin

Nationality of church planters		
	Frequency	Percentage
Dutch	48	22.4
German	35	16.3
British/English	31	14.5
American (USA)	28	13.0
Belgian	9	4.1
Hungarian	9	4.2
Swedish	6	3.3
French	5	2.4
Other (< 5 times)*	44	20.0
Total	215	100

Note. *African, American-Luxembourgian, American-Swedish, Austrian, Australian, British-Zimbabwean, Canadian, Finnish-British, Ecuadorean, Finnish, French, French-US, German-African (Eritrea), German-English, German-Russian, Greek, Indian, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Paraguayan, Romanian, Russian, Swiss, Spanish, Swedish-Brazilian, Ukrainian.

TABLE 3 Denominational attachment for regular pastors

	Frequency	Percentage
Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt	119	38.8
Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken	62	20.2
Protestantse Kerk in Nederland	56	18.2
Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken	45	14.7
Baptist	34	11.1
Evangelical (free church)	5	1.6
Other (< 5 times)*	13	3.8

Note. *Options that were mentioned: Gereformeerde Gemeenten, Pentecostal, Anglican, Nazarene, Doopsgezinde Broederschap (Anabaptist); a holy, catholic church; evangelical congregation in Flanders (Belgium); catholic/protestant; ecumenical community; Remonstranten; Roman Catholic Church (2x).

that are only present in The Netherlands, and English labels for international denominations. In both questionnaires, more than one denomination could be chosen, producing a cumulative percentage of over 100. Interestingly, this percentage is somewhat higher among church planters (112.1%) than among regular pastors (108.7%), while the category ‘other’ is almost ten times higher among church planters (27.4% vs. 2.9%). This may reflect the less defined, less institutionalized settings in which church planters work.

3.2 *Procedure*

Data were gathered in two periods. In the first period, running from October 2014 to February 2015, the BFI was made available in English to church planters only, as part of a larger survey, including demographic data, and a self-directed learning readiness scale. Thirty-six forms were collected during a European church planters’ conference in Paris (27-31 October 2014); the rest (twenty-three) was received through an online link. As explained above, these 59 forms were the basis of our 2017 article on the personality traits of church planters. The second period of data gathering ran from January 2016 to February 2017. In this period, the BFI was made available online in Dutch, English, French and German to church planters, and in Dutch, German and French to regular pastors.

The BFI for church planters (N=215) was addressed to those who had a leading role in a church plant of no more than five years before filling out the Inventory (28%), those who were church planters at the moment of responding (74%), and those who were preparing themselves to take a leading role in a

TABLE 4 Denominational attachment for church planters

	Frequency	Percentage
Reformed/Presbyterian	68	31.6
Baptist	68	31.6
Pentecostal	27	12.6
Lutheran	10	4.7
Anglican	7	3.3
Eastern Orthodox	2	0.9
Other*	59	27.4

Note. * Options that were mentioned: AGB (1); allgemein evangelikal (1); Brüdergemeinden (2); Calvary Chapel (1); charismatic holiness (1); Darby Brethren (2); Evangelic (2); Evangelical (10); Evangelical Free Church (2); Foursquare (2); Free Church (4); New Frontiers (2); free evangelical (3); Gnadauer Verband (1); independent evangelical (8); Independent FIEC (1); interdenominational church (2); Mennonite (2); Mission Covenant Church of Norway (1); Mix aus: Reformiert, Charismatisch, Emergent (1); Offene Brüdergemeinden (1); Pfingstler (1); Reformed Baptist (1); Salvation Army (2).

church plant within one year (17%). A ‘Church plant’ was defined as: “missionary Christian community, established no more than 5 years ago”, while ‘leading role’ was defined as: “your contribution was/is (humanly speaking) a crucial factor in the establishment of this church plant”. If one indicated that he or she was not involved in church planting the online link was automatically closed.

In the BFI for regular pastors (N=307) a church was defined as “a congregation, established at least 10 years ago”. The BFI was addressed to those who were pastors in such a church for no more than five years prior to filling out the Inventory (38%), those who were pastors in such a church at the moment of responding (90%), and those who were preparing themselves to become a pastor in such a church within one year (10%). The option ‘none of the above’ was also available, and led to the automatic closure of the online link.

4 Results

4.1 *Reliability Checks Big 5 Dimensions*

To check the reliability of the different dimensions of the Big 5 model, reliability analyses were conducted. The outcomes of these analyses are presented in Table 5. The reliability of all the separate dimensions (both church planters and regular pastors) were sufficient or good.

TABLE 5 Reliability statistics Big 5 dimensions

Dimension	Items (N)*	Alpha	
		Church planters	Regular pastors
Openness to experience	10	.66	.79
Conscientiousness	9	.81	.81
Extraversion	8	.86	.82
Agreeableness	9	.81	.65
Neuroticism	8	.83	.79

Note. *Respectively 2, 4, 3, 4, and 3 of these items were reversely scored.

TABLE 6 Descriptive statistics independent sample t-tests

Dimension	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Openness	Church planter	215	3,94	0.48	0.03
	Regular pastor	307	3,62	0.56	0.03
Conscientiousness	Church planter	215	3,84	0.63	0.04
	Regular pastor	307	3,55	0.56	0.03
Extraversion	Church planter	215	3,61	0.78	0.05
	Regular pastor	307	3,41	0.60	0.03
Agreeableness	Church planter	215	3,97	0.60	0.04
	Regular pastor	307	3,93	0.39	0.02
Neuroticism	Church planter	215	2,39	0.73	0.05
	Regular pastor	307	2,53	0.55	0.03

4.2 *Independent Sample t-tests*

By means of several independent samples t-tests, our research confirmed all our hypotheses (Table 6). Church planters score significantly higher than regular pastors on Openness ($t(353) = 6.91, p < .001$), Conscientiousness ($t(353) = 5.45, p < .001$), and Extraversion ($t(353) = 3.09, p = .002$). Furthermore, they score significantly lower on Neuroticism ($t(353) = 1.00, p = .320$); and there is no significant difference on Agreeableness ($t(353) = -2.43, p = .015$). These results imply that Church planters, on average, will be more open for new experiences, more conscientious, and more extravert than regular pastors. They will also be more emotional stable (c.f. less neurotic) and more or less as agreeable.

TABLE 7 Regular pastors and Church planters compared to norm group

Dimension		T	Df	P	M diff
Openness	Regular pastors	-8.03	306	.000**	-0.26
	Church planters	2.41	214	.017*	0.08
Conscientiousness	Regular pastors	-7.92	306	.000**	-0.25
	Church planters	1.81	214	.071	0.08
Extraversion	Regular pastors	5.02	306	.000**	0.17
	Church planters	6.69	214	.000**	0.36
Agreeableness	Regular pastors	1.23	306	.220	0.03
	Church planters	2.53	214	.012*	0.10
Neuroticism	Regular pastors	-17.76	306	.000**	-0.56
	Church planters	-15.31	214	.000**	-0.76

Note. Mean age church planters and regular pastors is respectively 48 and 41. * significant at $p < .05$ ** significant at $p < .01$.

While church planters and regular pastors differ considerably as to the different personality dimensions, both groups also stand out to some extent from the general population. Table 7 shows differences between church planters and regular pastors with their norm groups, derived from Srivastava et al. 2003 (mean age is respectively 48 and 41).

Regular pastors differ significantly from the general population (norm group; mean age 48), in that they are less open to experiences, less conscientious, more extravert, and less neurotic. Church planters, on the other hand, are even more extravert and less neurotic than regular pastors compared with the general population (norm group; mean age 41), but they are also significantly more agreeable and open to experiences. However, there seems to be no difference in conscientiousness with regard to the general population. Altogether, the psychological profile of religious professionals appears to differ significantly from that of the norm group, with the exception of agreeableness for regular pastors and conscientiousness for church planters. Also, regular pastors score significantly below the norm group in some dimensions (openness, conscientiousness), while church planters score above the norm group in all dimensions (if neuroticism is reversed to emotional stability).

The significant profile differences between regular pastors and church planters remain when the 307 regular pastors (all Dutch in our sample) are compared with the 48 Dutch church planters, although the effect sizes of the differences decrease as the sample size decreases (from 215 to 48). Dutch

TABLE 8 Descriptives Dutch church planters compared to norm group Dutch regular pastors

Dimension	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Openness	Church planter	48	4.02	0.42	0.06
	Regular pastor	307	3.62	0.56	0.03
Conscientiousness	Church planter	48	3.99	0.61	0.09
	Regular pastor	307	3.55	0.56	0.03
Extraversion	Church planter	48	3.67	0.75	0.11
	Regular pastor	307	3.41	0.60	0.03
Agreeableness	Church planter	48	4.12	0.52	0.07
	Regular pastor	307	3.93	0.39	0.02
Neuroticism	Church planter	48	2.19	0.73	0.11
	Regular pastor	307	2.53	0.55	0.03

church planters score significantly higher than (Dutch) regular pastors on Openness ($t(76) = -4.65, p < .001$), Conscientiousness ($t(353) = -4.99, p < .001$), Extraversion ($t(57) = -2.34, p = .023$), and Agreeableness ($t(56) = -2.42, p = .019$). Furthermore, they score significantly lower on Neuroticism ($t(56) = 3.10, p = .003$). This strongly suggests that the differences are culture-independent, and thus point towards a genuine psychological difference between ‘regular’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ religious leaders.

5 Discussion

5.1 Gender and Age

In comparison with our previous research (Foppen et al. 2017), the gender balance in this study has shifted somewhat. Our former data-set of church planters hardly contained any women, while both groups that we have studied in this article contain about 10% women. This is more than we would expect with regard to the church planters, as most research up till now indicates that this is an almost entirely male occupation. Furthermore, we expected more women among the regular pastors, as many older denominations have accepted the ordination of women. For example, the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, the largest Protestant denomination in The Netherlands, has approximately 25% female pastors, while 22% of its church planters are women. In our dataset

only one-third of all regular pastors came from churches that allowed women to become pastors at the time of our enquiry, this clearly influenced the lack of gender balance in our sample.

As for age, recent research indicates that pastors as a group are ageing. For example, the Barna Group found that the median age of Protestant clergy in the United States rose from 44 years in 1992 to 54 in 2017. Only one in seven pastors is under 40, and half are over 55 (Barna 2017). The same trend has been identified for Roman Catholic priests in the United States: the median age rose from 45 in 1970 to 59 (Gautier 2012). A Dutch report, based on a survey in the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN 2014) defined the average pastor as “a married man of about 55 years, satisfied but somewhat traditional”. Another Dutch study (Bakker, Lagemaat 2009), among free church and independent pastors, established their mean age as 48 years, somewhat younger than regular pastors in mainline churches. In this research, 91% of the pastors were men. In our study, the mean age of the regular pastors is also 48. This may reflect the rather high contribution by so-called ‘free’ and ‘independent’ pastors, as apparently the mean age of pastors in the larger and more mainline Protestantse Kerk in Nederland is considerably higher. The church planters, however, are clearly younger, as a group (mean age: 41). That church planters are younger than regular pastors may reflect the fact that church planters are more often in their first church, and also that church planting attracts more leaders who are in the first stage of their career.

5.2 *Big Five Studies among Pastors*

As far as we know there are no studies, except for our previous paper (Foppen et al. 2017), using the Big Five model to profile church planters. As for regular pastors, the amount of data is very limited. The present study has established that regular pastors are significantly less open to experiences, less conscientious, and less neurotic (more emotionally stable) than the average population. Also, they are more extravert, and about as agreeable as any other person. A somewhat similar profile was arrived at by Kosek (2000), using a more extended Big Five inventory than the one employed in this study (60 items), based on his research among 121 Roman Catholic seminarians. On agreeableness his respondents appear to score somewhat lower than ours, and on neuroticism a bit higher. In her MA thesis Krekeler investigated 33 United Methodist Pastors in the United States, using the 44-item BFI, with a view to correlating certain leadership styles and personality traits (2010:34). Compared with our findings and Kosek's, her scores seem to be rather high, which may be due to the small and rather homogeneous sample.

As for job performance, most research has focused on the prediction of burnout and job satisfaction, based on personality traits. Miner, and also Joseph et al., found that “the personality trait of neuroticism was the best predictor of subsequent anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion” (Miner 2007:25). This is a well-established finding in other studies among other professional groups as well (Seibert, Kraimer 2001:11; Joseph et al. 2011:278, 284-285). Both the regular pastors and the church planters in our data-set have significantly lower scores on neuroticism than the norm group, while church planters score significantly lower than the regular pastors. It may be expected, therefore, that they are less vulnerable to burnout and emotional exhaustion. This sits well with the results of the Dutch research among Protestant pastors, quoted above, which indicates a high job satisfaction among pastors, even in a context of ecclesial decline: 85% would become a pastor again, if they were given the choice (Protestantse Kerk 2014:7). Recent research among European church planters also suggests high levels of satisfaction, even if they often suffer from much more uncertain job conditions and unrealistically high expectations than regular pastors (Paas, Schoemaker-Kooy 2018).

Some studies also establish a positive relationship between openness to experience and emotional exhaustion, while others fail to find a correlation, or find a negative relationship (cf. Joseph et al. 2011:279). While Miner states that openness to experience among graduates contributes to emotional exhaustion and “depersonalization” one year later (Miner 2007:26), Joseph et al. could not find significant results (2011:286). A high degree of flexibility of one’s beliefs, and being very open to change one’s worldview may affect one’s well-being negatively. Such ministers would struggle to find inner resources to cope with stress, and find a strong basis for their ministry. Interestingly, the regular pastors in our research do not seem to be very open to new experiences (below the norm group), while the church planters score significantly higher. Openness to experience is a requirement for those who explore new contexts in mission, as church planters do more often than other pastors, but it may make them vulnerable to stress, and change or even loss of faith (cf. Paas, Schoemaker-Kooy 2018). Recent qualitative research among European church planters confirms that having a coherent, well-integrated worldview helps them to a great extent to cope with stress in sometimes very insecure circumstances, but also that some of them do experience changes in their worldview, and sometimes serious doubt (Paas, Schoemaker-Kooy 2018).

Consistent with other research among other occupational groups and among clergy (cf. Seibert, Kraimer 2001; Joseph 2011:278, 285), Miner asserts “that extraversion predicts high personal accomplishment” among clergy (2007:26). As extraversion comes with high degrees of sociability, assertiveness and energy,

and with positive feelings of personal accomplishment, it is to be expected that job-satisfaction will increase among pastors in the relational occupation that Christian ministry is (*ibid.*). This accords well with the aforementioned job satisfaction among (Dutch) pastors, and the significantly higher scores of both regular pastors and church planters on this dimension, compared to the norm group. As church planters score even higher than regular pastors, it may be expected that they are well predisposed for high personal accomplishment in ministry. As far as recruitment goes, there is indeed some evidence that recent church plants do a better job in terms of conversion growth than older churches, and this may have to do with the leadership in these church plants (*cf.* Paas, Vos 2016; Paas 2016:111-180; Paas 2018).

The limited available research among clergy, using the BFI as a profiling measure, suggests furthermore that conscientiousness correlates negatively with burnout (Joseph 2011:286). That stands to reason, as a disciplined working attitude may help a pastor to cope with job pressure and a lack of structure in the ministry. The regular pastors in our study score significantly lower than the norm group on this dimension. However, regular pastors work more often in bureaucratic settings where immediate job-performance is less dependent on personal management skills. Thus, it may be expected that this dimension does not exert much influence on pastoral well-being. The church planters, on the other hand, score significantly higher than regular pastors on conscientiousness, suggesting that they will be better at working in a less structured environment.

Agreeableness, finally, does not seem to influence burnout very much. Miner (2007) does not find significant correlations, while Joseph et al. (2011:285) find a negative association for only two dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization). As our regular pastors and our church planters do not differ significantly from each other, while only church planters differ from the norm group (more agreeable), no specific effects on professional well-being are to be expected.

5.3 *Entrepreneurship*

Entrepreneurial people are persons who by talent and temperament (*cf.* Bolton, Thompson 2013) are predisposed to see opportunities, create new ventures, explore new resources, and take personal risks while doing so. As such, entrepreneurs are seen as people especially apt to start up new businesses (Zhao, Seibert 2006:262-263). Also they are generally considered as creative people, looking for new opportunities, and finding them where other people are less likely to find or use them (*cf.* Volland 2015:3). Within a church context, church planting naturally qualifies as entrepreneurial activity, as it focuses on

the creation of new faith communities, while exploring new opportunities for mission, often in under-resourced contexts (Paas, Schoemaker 2018). In our previous study we quoted a qualitative study that seems to confirm that church planters see themselves first and foremost as entrepreneurs, while regular pastors consider themselves more as teachers (Vos 2012). Can psychological profiling further support this entrepreneurial profile of church planters?

Although a personality traits approach to entrepreneurship is sometimes rejected as too one-dimensional, there is a strong consensus that certain personality variables do affect organizational behaviour and leadership (Rauch, Frese 2007b). Moreover, the development of the Big Five model has stimulated this approach to entrepreneurial studies (Zhao, Seibert 2006:259). That something like an entrepreneurial personality exists, is suggested by studies that compare entrepreneurs with non-entrepreneurial peers (managers) or with the general population. Brandstätter (2011) reviews and summarizes five such (meta-analytical) studies (Stewart, Roth 2001; Zhao, Seibert 2006; Rauch, Frese 2007a; Zhao et al. 2010; Stewart, Roth 2007). The following conclusions with regard to Big Five traits have been established with some plausibility (Brandstätter 2011:226-227):

1. *Risk propensity.* There is clear empirical evidence that entrepreneurs are more risk prone than managers. More than managers they have to cope with situations that are unstructured and therefore more problematic for risk averse people. Significantly higher scores on extraversion and openness to experiences correlate positively with risk propensity, while higher scores on neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness correlate negatively. In our church planters' profile only their significantly higher scores on conscientiousness and agreeableness seem to contradict an entrepreneurial profile in this particular area. As conscientiousness is clearly an important factor in the long-term success of a new venture (cf. Ciavarella et al. 2004), this may indicate that a very high level of risk propensity is actually harmful for new venture creation. Also it must be noted that church planters, while scoring higher than regular pastors on conscientiousness, do not score above the norm group in this dimension. As for agreeableness, this dimension is discussed below.
2. *Openness to experience.* Entrepreneurs have substantially higher scores on this dimension than managers. This is especially important in contexts where innovation and creativity are important in business creation (cf. Antonic et al. 2015:831). Also, it may be expected that openness to experience is more important in the first stages of a project than in the latter stages, where high conscientiousness and low neuroticism become more important (cf. Lounsbury 2009). In fact, openness to experience

may affect long-term survival of a business negatively (Ciavarella et al. 2004). This correlates with the results of research among pastors mentioned above: being very open to new insights and ideas may not be helpful when a stable worldview and consistency of ideas is required. We have found that church planters are significantly more open to experiences than regular pastors and their norm group, which (again) confirms their entrepreneurial profile. However, the possible negative relationship with long-term survival may indicate that a good number of church planters are more predisposed to work in start-ups than in a long-term commitment to one church. This may explain why many church planters who are significantly more open to experiences and more conscientious than regular pastors, find it difficult to persist in what they do when the exciting work of pioneering becomes routine—even though they have the professional discipline to do so. This does not mean, however, that regular pastors would do a better job, given their significantly lower score on conscientiousness. It may be the bureaucratic structures around them, not their own skills, that keep them going. And, of course, many regular pastors leave their church for another after a few years of ministry in one place.

3. *Conscientiousness.* According to Zhao and Seibert (2006:264-265) the greatest difference between managers and entrepreneurs is found on this dimension, entrepreneurs having significantly higher scores (cf. Lounsbury 2009). It is important to note, however, that the Big Five dimensions are aggregated personality traits. Conscientiousness consists of at least two facets: achievement motivation (the discipline that is required to fulfil personal ambitions), and dependability. Entrepreneurs differ from managers only in the first aspect, allowing them to work better in less structured environments and without much external support. Thus, conscientiousness contributes both to the intention to become an entrepreneur, and to entrepreneurial success (Zhao et al. 2010; cf. Ciavarella et al. 2004). As our church planters score significantly higher than their peers in this dimension, this confirms their entrepreneurial profile within the religious sector.
4. *Extraversion.* In the meta-analyses reviewed by Brandstätter (2011) there are weak but significant positive correlations between extraversion and entrepreneurship, both with regard to intentions and to performance (cf. also Lounsbury et al. 2009; Leutner et al. 2014; Antonic et al. 2015). Entrepreneurs need a proactive personality, assertiveness, and an active nature. Being predisposed to extraversion contributes to this, just as openness to experience, conscientiousness (being disciplined without

being routinely dutiful), and low levels of neuroticism. Thus, extraverted individuals are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities such as starting new businesses and behaving entrepreneurially within organizations. However, both extraversion and agreeableness correlate negatively with types of entrepreneurship where creative achievement (such as new inventions) is crucial. Apparently, this demands a less outgoing, more solitary personality (Leutner 2014:61-62). This observation may be more suited for technical inventions, however, than for environments in which human relationships are crucial. Altogether, the significantly higher scores of our church planters on extraversion fit well into an entrepreneurial profile.

5. *Agreeableness.* That entrepreneurs have lower scores on this dimension than managers seems to be one of the most consistent findings in the psychological profiling of entrepreneurs (similarly, Lounsbury et al. 2009; Leutner et al. 2014; Antonic et al. 2015). Entrepreneurship requires a good deal of autonomy, i.e., the need to act independently of others or of social expectations. We have found that our regular pastors and our church planters do not differ significantly in this dimension, while regular pastors also have fairly average scores compared to their norm group. Interestingly, however, church planters appear to be significantly more agreeable than their norm group. This seems to contradict an entrepreneurial profile for church planters, but this would require more research into entrepreneurship in contexts where social relationships and community building are crucial. It may very well be the case that the church context, with strong expectations of being kind, accessible, and loving, attracts entrepreneurs who are more agreeable (or at least not significantly less agreeable) than other people. In fact, being less agreeable than the average person (or peers) may work against entrepreneurial success in a church context, as this work depends so much on the leaders' ability of building relationships, motivating volunteers, and being (or, at least, giving a plausible impression of) a kind and loving pastor.
6. *Neuroticism.* Most studies agree that neuroticism correlates negatively with entrepreneurial intentions and performance (also Lounsbury et al. 2009; cf. Leutner 2014), while some studies do not find a significant relationship (Antonic et al. 2015). Entrepreneurs have lower scores on this dimension than their peers, which makes sense given their need of stress tolerance and emotional stability. Our church planters have significantly lower scores on neuroticism than their peers, which contributes to their entrepreneurial profile.

6 Conclusions and Further Research

Based on empirical data gathered through a reliable and valid personality test we have concluded that church planters differ significantly from their peers on four of the five dimensions of the Big Five profile. Church planters are significantly more open to experiences, conscientious, and extravert, and significantly less neurotic than regular pastors. Also, church planters differ significantly from the average individual (norm group) in all dimensions of the Big Five. They score higher on Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Extraversion, while they score lower on Neuroticism. These traits and differences confirm that church planters share a more entrepreneurial personality profile, compared with their peers and with their norm group, with the possible exception of agreeableness. However, the specific context of church work may explain why church planters are not less agreeable than regular pastors and more agreeable than the average person, contrary to what may be expected from entrepreneurs in other professional contexts.

We have also established that pastors in general (regular pastors and church planters) are significantly more extravert and less neurotic than the general population, which accords well with a profession in which relationships are crucial, and where there are usually rather unclear expectations and goals. Our research confirms other research of a more qualitative nature which suggests that church leaders, while working in a pressured institution, usually experience much professional satisfaction.

Future research should focus, first, on expanding the data-base of church leaders, using the BFI for profiling. Currently, different psychological profiling instruments are being used, even in the rather limited field of religious professionals. In order to make broader comparisons possible, it is important that validated and widely recognized instruments are used. Second, as the Big Five model is an aggregated set of psychological facets, and entrepreneurship requires an extended set of specific qualities, more refined research into the correlations between specific psychological traits and entrepreneurial qualities is required. Third, relations between personality profiles and job performance (other than burnout research) are becoming increasingly possible now that different groups of pastors have been profiled. In the context of mission we might think, for example, of making predictions about personality profiles and church growth (cf. Machel 2006; Paas 2018), sustainability, and theological innovation.

Literature

- Antoncic, B. (2015), T.B. Kregar, G. Singh, A.F. DeNoble. "The Big Five Personality-Entrepreneurship Relationship: Evidence from Slovenia" in *Journal of Small Business Management* 53(3), 819-841.
- Bakker, H.A. (2009), T. van de Lagemaat. *De evangelische voorganger in beeld: Onderzoek naar de opvattingen van evangelische voorgangers in Nederland*. Ede: Lectoraat Gemeenteopbouw Christelijke Hogeschool Ede.
- Barna Group (2017). "The Aging of America's Pastors". <https://www.barna.com/research/aging-americas-pastors/>.
- Bolton, B. (2013), J. Thompson. *Entrepreneurs: Talent, Temperament, and Opportunity*. London: Routledge (3rd ed.).
- Brandstätter, H. (2011). "Personality aspects of entrepreneurship: A look at five meta-analyses" in *Personality and Individual Differences* 51, 222-230.
- Burton, L. (2010), L.J. Francis, M. Robbins. "Psychological Type Profile of Methodist Circuit Ministers in Britain: Similarities to and Differences from Anglican Clergy" in *Journal of Empirical Theology* 23, 64-81.
- Ciavarella, M.A. (2004), A.K. Buchholtz, C.M. Riordan, R.D. Gatewood, G.S. Stokes. "The Big Five and venture survival: Is there a linkage?" in *Journal of Business Venturing* 19, 465-483.
- Foppen, A. (2017), S. Paas, J. van Saane. "Personality Traits of Church Planters in Europe" in *Journal of Empirical Theology* 30, 25-40.
- Francis, L.J. (2009). "Psychological Type Theory and Religious and Spiritual Experiences" in: M. de Souza et al. (eds.). *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care and Wellbeing* (International Handbooks of Religion and Education, 3). New York: Springer, 125-145.
- Francis, L.J. (2013). "Psychological-type theory and Christian theology: A conflict between implicit and explicit religions?" in *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 16(9), 964-974.
- Francis, L.J. (2015), G. Crea "Psychological Temperament and the Catholic Priesthood: An Empirical Enquiry Among Priests in Italy" in *Pastoral Psychology* 64, 827-837.
- Galea, P. (2010). "Identifying Personality Features Related to Religious Vocation: A Comparison between Seminarians and their Peers Using the NEO Personality Inventory (Revised)" in *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 32, 169-177.
- Gautier, M.L. (2012), P.M. Perl, S.J. Fichter. *Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood since Vatican II*. Liturgical Press: Collegeville.
- Goldberg, L.R. (1990). "An Alternative Description of Personality: The Big Five Factor Structure" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59, 1216-1229.
- Goldberg, L.R. (1993). "The Structure of Phenotypic Personality Traits" in *American Psychologist* 48(1), 26-34.

- John, O.P. (1991), E.M. Donahue, R.L. Kentle. *The Big Five Inventory: Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley CA: University of California.
- John, O.P. (2008), L.P. Naumann, C.J. Soto. "Paradigm Shift to the Integrative Big-Five Trait Taxonomy: History, Measurement, and Conceptual Issues". In: O.P. John, R.W. Robins, L.A. Pervin (eds.). *Handbook of personality: Theory and research*. New York: Guilford, 114-158.
- Kosek, R.B. (2000). "The Desire for God: An Assessment of Seminarians' Spirituality Through the Lens of the 'Big Five'" in *Pastoral Psychology* 49(1), 43-50.
- Krekeler, L.A. (2010). "The Relationship Between Servant Leadership Behavior and Individual Personality Style in New York Annual Conference United Methodist Pastors". MA Thesis Seton Hall University (online).
- Leutner, F. (2014), G. Ahmetoglu, R. Akhtar, T. Chamorro-Premuzic. "The relationship between the entrepreneurial personality and the Big Five personality traits" in *Personality and Individual Differences* 63, 58-63.
- Lounsbury, J.W. (2009), R.M. Smith, J.J. Levy, F.T. Leong, L.W. Gibson. "Personality Characteristics of Business Majors as Defined by the Big Five and Narrow Personality Traits" in *Journal of Education for Business* 84(4), 200-205.
- Machel, E. (2006). "The Relationship Between Leadership Traits and Church Growth Among Pastors of Free Churches in Germany". PhD Thesis Andrews University. Ann Arbor.
- Miner, M. (2007). "Burnout in the first year of ministry: Personality and belief style as important predictors" in *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 10(1), 17-29.
- Moynagh, M. (2017). *Church in Life: Innovation, Mission and Ecclesiology*. London: SCM Press.
- Nortomaa, A. (2016). "Predicting Ordination, Early-Career Mobility, and Career Adaptation from Ministerial Applicants' Psychological Results" in *Review of Religious Research* 58, 543-569.
- Paas, S. (2016). *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Paas, S. (2018). "A Case of Church Growth by Church Planting in Germany: Are They Causally Connected?". *International Bulletin of Mission Studies* 42(1), 40-54.
- Paas, S. (2013), A. Vos. "Nieuwe kerkvorming als kwantitatieve groeistrategie" in *Religie & Samenleving* 8(2), 265-288.
- Paas, S. (2016), A. Vos. "Church Planting and Church Growth in Western Europe: An Analysis" in *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 40(3), 243-252.
- Paas, S. (2018), M. Schoemaker-Kooy. "Crisis and Resilience among Church Planters in Europe", *Mission Studies* 35 (2018), 366-388.
- Piedmont, R.L. (1999). "Strategies for Using the Five-Factor Model of Personality in Religious Research" in *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 27(4), 338-350.
- Protestantse Kerk (2014). "Kerkelijk werkers en predikantenonderzoek" (online).

- Rauch, A. (2007a), M. Frese. "Let's put the person back into entrepreneurship research: A meta-analysis on the relationship between business owners' personality traits, business creation, and success" in *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 16(4), 353-385.
- Rauch, A. (2007b), M. Frese. "Born to Be an Entrepreneur? Revisiting the Personality Approach to Entrepreneurship" in: J.R. Baum, M. Frese, R.A. Baron (eds.). *The Psychology of Entrepreneurship*. New York: Psychology Press, 41-65.
- Van Saane, J. (2012). *Geloofwaardig leiderschap*. Delft: Meinema.
- Seibert, S.E. (2001), M.L. Kraimer. "The Five-Factor Model of Personality and Career Success" in *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 58, 1-21.
- Srivastava, S. (2003), O.P. John, S.D. Gosling, J. Potter. "Development of personality in early and middle adulthood: Set like plaster or persistent change?" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, 1041-1053.
- Stewart Jr., W.H. (2001), P.L. Roth. "Risk propensity differences between entrepreneurs and managers: A meta-analytical review" in *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86, 145-153.
- Stewart Jr., W.H. (2007), P.L. Roth. "A meta-analysis of achievement motivation: Differences between entrepreneurs and managers" in *Journal of Small Business Management* 45, 401-421.
- Strawn, B.D. (2008), M. Alexander. "Correlation of Self-Perception and Image of Christ Using the Five-Factor Model of Personality" in *Pastoral Psychology* 56, 341-353.
- Sunardi, Y. (2014). "Predictive Factors for Commitment to the Priestly Vocation: A Study of Priests and Seminarians". PhD Thesis. Milwaukee: Marquette University.
- Village, A. (2013). "Traditions within the Church of England and Psychological Type: A Study among the Clergy" in *Journal of Empirical Theology* 26, 22-44.
- Volland, M. (2015). *The Minister as Entrepreneur: Leading and Growing the Church in an Age of Rapid Change*. London: SPCK.
- Vos, A. (2012). "Hoop: Een onderzoek naar de missionaire effectiviteit van kerkplantingen binnen de NGK, CGK en GKV in Nederland". MA Thesis Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- Warner, S.R. (1993). "Work in Progress: Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States" in *American Journal of Sociology* 98, 1044-1093.
- Yukl, G. (2010). *Leadership in Organizations*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson.
- Zhao, H. (2006), S.E. Seibert. "The Big Five Personality Dimensions and Entrepreneurial Status: A Meta-Analytical Review" in *Journal of Applied Psychology* 91(2), 259-271.
- Zhao, H. (2010), S.E. Seibert, G.T. Lumpkin. "The relationship of personality to entrepreneurial intentions and performance: A meta-analytic review" in *Journal of Management* 36, 381-404.